

TO
THE MEMORY
OF
THE LATE MINA LIPPMAN AARON
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THE
STORY OF CHANUKAH

BY

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THE FESTIVAL

The festival of Chanukah was instituted by Judas Maccabeus and the elders of the Congregation of Israel in the year 3595 on the 25th day of Kislev.



THE STORY OF CHANUKA.

Upon the death of Alexander the Great, under whose reign the Jews enjoyed freedom and peace, his kingdom was divided among his generals, one of whom took Egypt and another, Syria. There was continual strife between the kings of these two countries, for each wanted to subject the other to his rule. Palestine, being situated between Syria and Egypt, became the battlefield upon which their armies fought. At times, the kings of Syria would be victorious, and at times the kings of Egypt would gain the upper hand. For a long time the armies of Egypt were victors, and so it happened that many of the Jews went to live in Alexandria, where they acquired many of the Greek customs practiced there. Judea, in the meantime, became a tributary to Egypt. The Jews were treated well by the Egyptians; they were allowed to appoint their own governors; and their religion was not interfered with.

About 100 years after the death of Alexander, Antiochus III., surnamed the Great, ascended the throne of Syria. He conquered Egypt and with it Palestine. The position of the Jews, however, was not changed; they were mildly ruled, and their government was left in their own hands. Antiochus was succeeded by his oldest son, Seleucus Philopater.

In the tenth year of the reign of Seleucus, something happened in Judea that caused him to turn his attention to the treasures deposited in the Temple at Jerusalem. A violent quarrel broke out between Onias III., who was at that time the High Priest in Judea, and Simon, who had been appointed governor of Jerusalem. In order to injure Onias, Simon told the King that there were great riches in the Temple. Seleucus received this news with joy, for he was at this time hard pressed for money to pay his annual tribute to the Romans. He sent out his treasurer, Heliodorus, to plunder the Temple, and bring back these riches to Antioch.

HELIODORUS IN THE TEMPLE.

Heliodorus immediately set out for Jerusalem, without acquainting any one of his purpose. When he arrived there, he told Onias of the King's orders, and demanded that he quietly sur-

render the treasure. The High Priest replied that there was quite a large treasure in the Temple, but that it was by no means as large as had been reported; that the greater part of it consisted of holy gifts consecrated to God; that a considerable amount was deposited by Hyrcanus, a man high in favor of the King; and that the remainder was deposited by widows and orphans for safe-keeping. He added that he could not consent to deprive the rightful owners of their property, and thus profane his high office, which was holy and revered by all.

The commands of the King were strict and Heliodorus remained firm in his purpose. Attended by a large number of armed men, he marched to the Temple; and when the priests tried to oppose his progress, he ordered that the outer gates be destroyed. A great mourning arose in the whole city, and from all sides were heard the cries of the people. But as soon as Heliodorus attempted to enter the Temple, a wonderful thing happened. Legend has it that a horse, mounted by a terrible rider, rushed toward him, and struck him with its fore-foot. Two beautiful youths, who attended the warrior, then beat Heliodorus with rods until he fainted. When Heliodorus was carried out of the Temple by the priests, the spark of life scarcely burned within

him. When Onias, the High Priest, saw this, fearing lest the wrath of the King should be incurred, offered sacrifices and prayers to God, and thus restored Heliodorus to life. The treasurer returned to Antioch empty-handed, and told the King of his failure.

ANTIOCHUS CROWNED KING OF SYRIA.

In the course of the same year, Heliodorus, in hopes of succeeding to the throne, poisoned Seleucus, the King. When Antiochus, the King's brother, who was returning from Rome, heard of this, he immediately secured the aid of another king, and easily crushed the usurper. Antiochus IV. now became King of Syria.

BUYING THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD.

Scarcely had Antiochus begun to rule, when from all parts of his empire came the leading men to pay homage to him. Among them came a younger brother of the High Priest Onias, Joshua, who called himself by the Greek name Jason. This Jason was possessed of good manners and polished address. At the court of Antiochus, he was welcomed; and, by offering the King a very large bribe, prevailed upon him to depose his brother Onias, and appoint him in his place. Not only was Onias removed from the

High Priesthood, but he was also forced to take up his residence at Antioch, where he would not interfere with the new High Priest. Jason next attempted to gradually make Greeks of the Jews. Accordingly, he built a place in Jerusalem for such sports and exercises as were practiced by the Greeks, and established a school in which Jewish youths could be brought up after the manner of the Greeks.

Jason remained High Priest for only three years. Menelaus, an ambitious and dishonest young man, having been sent to Antioch by Jason with tribute, by offering to pay annually a sum amounting to \$300,000 more than Jason, succeeded in having himself appointed in his place. This Menelaus was even more corrupt than Jason, and later proved himself guilty of the most horrible crimes.

MENELAUS' SACRILEGE.

Menelaus soon found that he was unable to pay the large amount of money which he had promised to Antiochus. The King, who demanded punctuality of his subjects in their payment of tribute, summoned him to Antioch. Fearing that he would be punished or stripped of his office, he sent secret directions to his brother Lysima-

chus, who was acting as High Priest during his absence, to remove some of the holy vessels from the Temple, and to send him the money obtained by selling them. When Onias, the deposed High Priest heard of this, his anger was aroused, and he accused Menelaus of robbing the Temple. Menelaus fearing, that he would be removed from his office, bribed one of the King's officers to kill Onias. When Onias learned of the plot against his life, he escaped; but later, when the officer induced him to return by assurances of safety, he was brutally murdered.

Great was the anger of the Jews when they heard of this new outrage. The people of Jerusalem rose up against the brother of Menelaus, and put to route a number of his followers who tried to defend him. Lysimachus, himself, escaped to the treasury of the Temple, but was pursued and killed. Menelaus, in the meantime by bribing the King, gained his support, and continued to remain in the office of High Priest.

ANTIOCHUS'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.

While Antiochus was engaged in attacking Egypt, a report was spread that he had been killed. This news was received by the Jews with

great joy. Jason, the deposed High Priest, knowing that Menelaus would now be left without a protector entered Jerusalem, defeated the soldiers of Menelaus, and put the latter to flight. Jason did not remain there long, however, for it soon became known that Antiochus was alive and that he was marching towards Jerusalem with a large army. Antiochus, in the meantime, had been led to believe that the entire Jewish nation had revolted; and further angered by the fact that the news of his death had caused such rejoicing, quickly returned from Egypt; and entered Jerusalem, where he killed 40,000 of the inhabitants, and took as many captive. He then robbed the treasury of the Temple, and removed to Antioch all the sacred vessels, the table of shewbread, the golden candlestick, and the altar of incense.

THE MASSACRE OF THE JEWS.

Upon his return, two years later from Egypt, where he had been expelled, Antiochus determined to avenge himself upon the Jews, whom he now hated bitterly. Appolonius, one of his chief generals, was sent to Judea with an army. Inasmuch as that general had been sent there before with his troops as a collector of taxes, his coming caused no alarm. His soldiers did not

trouble the inhabitants, who had not the slightest suspicion of their intentions. When the Sabbath came, the Syrians, knowing that the Jews would not take up arms on that day even in self-defence, fell upon them and slaughtered them mercilessly. The Jews, obeying the laws of the Sabbath, which forbade them to fight on that day, meekly submitted to be butchered. Houses were pulled down and plundered, and the walls of the city destroyed.

THE DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE.

The King next issued a decree forbidding the Jews to follow their religion and their customs, and ordering them to adopt the Greek faith. The keeping of the Sabbath and the reading of the Law was prohibited on pain of death. Copies of the Scriptures were written upon with the blood of swine, torn into pieces, or burnt. Altars were set up all over the country, and unclean animals sacrificed on them. The Jews were forced to profane the Sabbath and to eat the flesh of swine. The Temple in Jerusalem was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, whose statue was erected on the altar of burnt offerings, and sacrifices made to it. In order to escape this terrible persecution, many Jews fled from the holy city to the mountains. The once beautiful Jerusalem, in which

the Jewish people had for so many years enjoyed happiness and peace, was now laid waste like a wilderness and became an abode for strangers.

ANTIOCHUS THE MADMAN.

In order to enforce his laws, the cruel king of Syria sent officers to the various parts of his empire. Of the two names by which Antiochus was known—Epiphanes, the “Illustrious” and Epimanes, the “Madman”—he was more often called by the latter name. He frequently indulged in wine, and while under its influence he became a real madman. His highest ambition was to make one people of all his subjects. In order to accomplish this, he thought it best,—and here he was indeed Epimanes, “the mad”,—to compel them to adopt one faith. The Jews however, were not going to submit to the rash demands of a madman. They now began a struggle which has never been equalled in the history of the world. In the few years that followed, many Jews sacrificed their lives for refusing to worship heathen idols and gods, many heroes shed their blood on the field of battle to uphold their religion.

ELEAZAR.

In Antioch, there lived a pious old man in his ninetieth year, named Eleazar. When the over-

seers came to see that the commands of the King were obeyed, this old man refused to eat of the swine's flesh which was offered him. The King's officer not wishing to harm so old a man, offered to give him meat which he was allowed to eat but which it would be announced was swine's flesh. In making this offer, the overseer thought that if the other people would see the respected Eleazar eating what they thought was pig's flesh, that they would readily do as he did. The brave old man, however, refused to set such an example to the Jews, some of whom would excuse their weakness by his act. He was then stripped of his clothes, beaten, and tortured. The last words of the martyr were: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One", and then he died.

HANNAH AND HER SEVEN SONS.

Even more pitiable is the story of Hannah and her seven sons. A widow and her sons were brought before Antiochus and commanded to bow to his idols. The King first addressed the oldest of the sons, saying: "Bow to my gods". "God forbid", answered the oldest son, "that I should bow to your idols". "Why not?" asked the King. "Because our commandments teach

us, "I am the Lord your God", and I shall worship no other". After being cruelly tortured in the sight of his mother and brothers, he was put to death.

"You have seen what was done to your brother for disobeying me. Now, bow to my gods", said the King to the second son. "You can torture me as you will", said the youth. "I shall not bow to your idols". "Why not?" asked the King. "Because we are commanded, "Thou shalt have no other God but me", he answered. The King ordered that he, too, be slain.

"Obey me and your life shall be spared", said the King to the third son, after threatening to tear out his tongue and cut off his hands if he were not obeyed. "Do you seek to terrify me", cried the brave lad. "Our religion teaches us, "Thou shalt worship no other Gods", and like my bothers I shall not forsake my religion, and like them I shall die". Then he was killed.

"Do not think that God has given us into your hands to add honor to your name; it is to make known to the world that a more cruel and wicked man has never lived", answered the fifth son when commanded to bow to the King's gods. "Remove the insolent fellow", cried the King, full of wrath. And so the brave boy died.

The sixth son was then brought before the King. But he, too, suffered the fate of his brothers.

Finally, there remained only the mother and her youngest son, a mere child. When Antiochus saw him, his heart was moved, and he spoke kindly to the child. "Come, my son," he said to him, "and bow to my gods". But the boy following the noble example set by his brothers, refused to obey. Then the King tried to induce him to bow by tempting offers of riches and honor. "If you will but obey me", the King said to him, "I shall bring you up in riches and splendor; and, when you are old enough, I shall make of you a mighty prince, second only to me". Antiochus could promise what he would, but the child was not to be tempted.

The mighty Antiochus was conquered, and now his greatest desire was to induce the boy to obey him. To accomplish this, he resorted to a trick. "My son", he said to him, "you see your brothers lying dead before you; if you will refuse to do as I ask you, you shall share their fate. But I do not wish to harm you; you are too young to die. I am going to cast my ring on the ground, pick it up and your life will be spared". To kneel down and pick up the ring

was not wrong, it was only a mark of respect to the King which the Jewish Law permitted. But the boy, young as he was, quickly saw that if he would do so, the surrounding crowds would think that he was bowing to the idol. For this reason, he refused to comply with the King's request.

The King was now growing fast impatient, and, as a last resort, turned to the mother and told her to induce her son to do as he requested of him. But the mother was as faithful to her religion and brave as her sons. She took her son to an adjoining room, and there urged him to remain loyal and firm, that he might soon rejoin his brothers in heaven. Then, denouncing the cruel King in the strongest terms, she again encouraged him to remain faithful to the laws of their fathers. But the boy knew himself what was right to do, and soon told the King that he would never obey him.

The King now grew angry indeed, and ordered that the lad be slain. But the mother, throwing her arms around the boy, begged the King to kill her instead of her son. "No", answered the King mockingly, "I cannot do so because your own laws forbid it; for is it not said, "Whether it be an ox or a sheep, thou shalt not kill it and its young in one day". As the boy was being led away, Hannah cried out, "I have surpassed Ab-

raham. He built one altar on which to sacrifice one son, whereas I have built seven altars on which I have sacrificed seven sons". One by one Hannah had seen her sons cruelly murdered; and, no longer able to endure her misery, she jumped down from a roof and was killed.

Eleazar and Hannah and her seven sons were only a few of the constantly increasing number of martyrs, who preferred to sacrifice their lives than to disobey the laws of their fathers. Never before had the Jews been treated with such great cruelty, but never before did they endure their misery with greater courage. It was in vain that Antiochus ordered the Jews to worship heathen idols; it was in vain that he commanded them to adopt the religion of the Greeks. In many towns the royal officers found no one to meet them, for the inhabitants had escaped to the mountains, where they could privately observe their laws. The resistance which the Jews offered only made the King more angry, and caused him to increase his cruelties. Houses were plundered; synagogues were destroyed; and thousands of Jews were put to death, victims of the wrath of the King.

MATTATHIAS AND HIS FIVE SONS.

And thus, when the Jews were on verge of being wiped out as a nation forever, there arose

in their midst a family of heroes, who were destined to free their people from their cruel oppressors, and again establish their independence.

In Modin, a small town in Judea, there lived an old man by the name of Mattathias. He was the head of the priestly family of Hasmoneans named after Hasmoneus, his great grand-father. Mattathias was the father of five grown-up sons, Jochanan, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. He saw how the holy city was delivered into the hands of strangers, how the temple was robbed of its treasures and profaned by the Syrians, how men, women, and children were being killed for observing the Jewish laws, and he mourned for Israel. He was accustomed to say to his sons that it were far better to sacrifice their lives for their religion than to submit to such cruel treatment at the hands of the Syrians.

When the royal officer came to Modin to enforce the commands of the King, he requested Mattathias, who was the oldest of the community, to make the first sacrifice to the Greek gods. He indignantly refused, saying that though every one else were to yield, yet he would rather die than forsake his religion. He then commanded his sons to follow his example. When a cowardly apostate stepped forward to offer

the sacrifice, Mattathias could not restrain himself, and killed both the Jew and the officer.

THE ESCAPE TO THE MOUNTAINS.

Mattathias then cried out in a loud voice, "Whosoever is zealous for the Law, and supporteth the Covenant, follow me", with his sons and a few of his followers, Mattathias fled to the mountains. Many Jews who favored their plan of resistance now joined their numbers. Whenever the opportunity offered, they would attack the Syrian garrisons, and often were successful. They drove out the overseers of the King who came to enforce idol worshipping, and destroyed every heathen altar they gained access to. They reestablished public worship, and did what was in their power to restore the government of Israel. The Syrian generals, however, soon found out how the Jews were occupying themselves. Taking advantage of their strict observance of the Sabbath, they attacked one thousand Jews, who, having escaped to a cave, allowed themselves to be slaughtered without making any attempt to defend themselves. Mattathias, foreseeing that if the Jews would offer no resistance on the Sabbath, that they would quickly be wiped out, decided that it was not only

lawful for them to fight on that day, but that it was their duty to do so. The decision of Mattathias was accepted by all, and the Jews thereafter did not hesitate to fight on the Sabbath, when their lives were at stake.

THE DEATH OF MATTATHIAS.

As Mattathias was too old to endure the hardships of war, he found himself growing weaker each day. Knowing that he was about to die, he summoned his sons around him, gave them his last blessing, and encouraged them to continue the noble work which he had begun. He appointed Judas, who was the bravest of his sons, to be their leader in battle, and Simon, who was the wisest of them, the counsellor of the nation. Then Mattathias died, and the whole nation mourned for him.

JUDAS MACCABAEUS.

An abler leader than Judas could not have been chosen. A giant in stature, it was said of him that when he walked, the earth trembled beneath him, and that his battle-cry resounded like the roar of a lion. His bold fearlessness made him the terror of his enemies, who shrunk from him. But besides his great strength and his remarkable courage, he possessed that love

for his God, that enthusiasm for his religion that left nothing impossible. No disadvantage was for him too great to overcome; no army too numerous to defeat. His personal strength and extraordinary bravery won for him his surname "Maccabee", a Hebrew word meaning "Hammerer". There are many who say that this surname is derived from the first letters of the Hebrew words "מִי כָמוֹךָ בְּאֱלֹהִים" "Who is like thee, O Lord among the Gods", which were inscribed on Judas's banner. At first, Judas was the only one to be honored by the surname "Maccabee"; but, later, the name passed to his brothers; and, finally, to all who fought under his standard.

THE DEFEAT OF APPOLONIUS.

Judas went a step further than his father, fortifying those cities which he took by surprise. His small troop gradually became a small army, numbering six thousand. Having assured himself that he could rely on them, Judas prepared to meet the enemy on the field. Appolonius, the Syrian general who had recently plundered Jerusalem and murdered its inhabitants, was soon informed of the revolt, and raised a large army to crush Judas. But Judas, although his army

was only a handful compared with the large forces of the enemy, marched against Appolonius, and totally defeated his army and slew him. Judas took the sword of Appolonius as a trophy, and used it in all his latter battles.

THE ROUTING OF SERON.

Seron, the Syrian lieutenant, aroused by the news of Appolonius's defeat, gathered a still larger army than that which had been defeated, and advanced against Judas. According to their usual custom before fighting, Judas and his men had fasted; and, weak with hunger and fatigue, the Jews despaired of success when they saw what a mighty host was coming to meet them. But Judas encouraged them to fight boldly against the oppressors of their people, saying that strength came from heaven and not from large numbers, and reminding them that they fought for their lives and their laws. When he had finished speaking he rushed upon the Syrians as they were ascending the rocky hills at Bethoron. Seron fell early in the battle, and his army, confused and without a commander, was routed with great loss of life.

THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT PLACED IN CHARGE OF LYSIAS.

When King Antiochus heard of the victories

of Judas, he was greatly angered and raised a large army to crush him. But along with the news of the uprising of the Jews came the report that his eastern provinces, Armenia and Persia, had refused to pay their tribute. Finding his treasury almost empty, the King was forced to leave Antioch to collect the tribute from these provinces by force. He gave Lysias, one of the royal blood, one-half of all the Syrian forces; and placed him in charge of his kingdom, with orders to destroy the Jewish nation, and people their land with strangers.

JUDAS'S VICTORY OVER NICANOR AND GORGAS.

In obedience to the King's command, Lysias sent out, on the following year, forty thousand footmen and five thousand horse, under Nicanor and Gorgias. These generals set out for Judea, and encamped on the plains of Emmaus. So confident were the Syrians of victory, that Nicanor, one of their generals, announced before hand a sale of Jewish captives at ninety for a talent—about \$1000. Many Slave-Merchants were in this way attracted to the camp, each supplied with large amounts of gold and silver and chains to lead off their slaves.

Judas, in the meantime, having heard that

the Syrian armies had come to fight against him, assembled his six thousand men at Mizpah near Emmaus, where they fasted and prayed as in the days of Samuel. They opened the books of the Law, upon which the heathens had painted images of their gods; and they were reminded of the desolation of their holy city, the profaning of the Temple, and all the wicked deeds of Antiochus. Then Judas, in strict accordance with the Law, ordered all those who had recently married, built a house, planted a vineyard, or were afraid, to return to their homes. His army, as a result, was reduced from six thousand to three thousand men. Judas then encouraged the remaining men to fight bravely for their people, and ordered them to prepare for battle.

In the meantime, Gorgias with five thousand footmen and one thousand horse, had set out to surprise the Jewish army by night. But Judas was soon informed of this movement, and he immediately devised a plan by which he could take advantage of the separation of the two generals. Silently and quickly he gathered his men, and set out with them for Emmaus, where the remainder of the Syrian army under Nicanor lay encamped.

It was morning before he arrived; and, encouraging his men not to fear the large number of the enemy by reminding them how the Jews

were saved from the Egyptians in the Red Sea, he rushed down upon the Syrians. The Syrian general, thinking that Gorgias would easily crush the small army of the Jews, had taken no steps to guard against a surprise. The Syrians, panic-stricken and confused, offered but feeble resistance, and fled from all sides. Several tents had been set on fire in the confusion, but Judas wisely forbade the Jews to extinguish the flames or to plunder the camps, for Gorgias had to be met and defeated.

Gorgias and his army, meanwhile, finding the camps of the Jews deserted, thought that they had fled to the mountains, and went to look for them. But what was their surprise when they beheld the smoke rising from the tents of their comrades! Thus deceived, the Syrians lost all their courage; and, upon seeing Judas marching toward them, they too turned their backs and fled.

It was a great victory for the Maccabaeen soldiers, and they returned joyfully to the Syrian camps, where they examined their rich plunder, consisting not only of large quantities of food and clothing, but also of the large sums of money which the slave dealers had brought along with them. As a just punishment for the slave dealers who had come to buy, the Jews sold as many

of them as they could find, as slaves. The next day was the Sabbath, and it was indeed a day of rest and rejoicing for the brave Jews.

THE RETREAT OF LYSIAS.

Nicanor, who had escaped from Judea disguised as a slave, now returned to Antioch, where he informed Lysias of his defeat. At this news, Lysias was aroused; and raised a still larger army than any that had been sent before against Judea, this time consisting of sixty thousand footmen and five thousand horse. At the head of this vast multitude, Lysias himself marched against the Jews. Judas with only ten thousand men met the Syrian army at Beth-Tsur, where the battle took place. Although Lysias lost but five thousand men, he was discouraged from continuing battle, for he saw that the Jews were determined to conquer or die. He therefore made his retreat from Judea and returned to Antioch.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE.

Now that Lysias, the strongest of the King's generals, had been driven from Judea, the victorious Jews could turn their attention to the holy city, which had been defiled by the Syrians. Judas and his men now entered Jerusalem. They found the city in ruins, the altar profaned, the

gates of the city burned up, and shrubs growing in the inner courts of the Temple. At the sight of this desolation, the Jews rent their clothes, put ashes on their heads, and cried towards heaven. But Judas did not allow his men to spend too much time in useless lamentation, and set out at once to cleanse the Temple. He then chose priests to enter the Temple to repair and purify it. The altar which had been defiled by the heathens, they set up anew. The holy vessels, which had been profaned by the Syrians, they replaced new ones. So zealously was the work of the restoration carried on, that on the 25th day of the month of Kislev, the public worship could again be performed. With songs and thanksgiving, the Jews dedicated the Temple anew on that happy day.

The Talmud relates that when the purification of the Temple had been completed, no consecrated oil could be found with which to light the golden candlestick. After a careful search, however, a small bottle of oil, with the seal of a former High Priest still on it, was found. But it contained only a small quantity of oil, hardly sufficient to last for one day. But lo! a miracle happened. When the oil was lit, not only did it last for one day but for eight days! This was interpreted as a sure sign that God was looking

upon the work of his people with favor, and served to increase their happiness.

What a change the condition of the Jews had undergone! Only three years before the Temple had been dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, and the flesh of swine sacrificed on the altar of incense. And now, the most powerful of the Syrian generals had been driven out from Judea. The bravest of them feared the terrible Maccabee, whose fame as a warrior was now spread far and wide. Public worship had been restored, not to be discontinued again until the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans, several hundred years later. Although the war continued for many years longer, yet with the dedication of the Temple and the public observance of the Jewish Laws, the actual rule of the Syrians may be said to have come to an end. Judea was now practically independent.

THE FESTIVAL OF CHANUKA.

The restoration of the public worship in the Temple was an event well worth remembering; and, for this reason, Judas and the Great Council decided that the eight days beginning with the 25th of Kislev should be celebrated henceforth, annually, as a festival of rejoicing and thanksgiving to commemorate the victory of the small band of Jews over the mighty hosts of the Syri-

ans. To this day, this festival which is known as **חנוכה** the "Feast of Dedication", is celebrated by the Jews each year all over the world. On the eight days candles are lit, and special prayers are offered to the Lord for that He saved his people from being wiped out as a nation forever.



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